



**Public Realm Scrutiny**  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**Report from Community Protection,  
Children and Young People  
Services**

**Knife Crime: An inquiry into knife crime in Brent – summary update**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	Two  <b>Appendix 1</b> – Violence Reduction Action Plan <b>Appendix 2</b> – Youth Justice Plan 2020/21
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<a href="https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/violence-reduction-unit-vru/partnerships">https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/violence-reduction-unit-vru/partnerships</a>
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Colin Wilderspin Head of Community Protection Tel: 020 8937 5367 <a href="mailto:Colin.wilderspin@brent.gov.uk">Colin.wilderspin@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 Brent Council is committed to tackling knife crime and working in partnership to enable a targeted response and safeguard our community. This report is to provide an update and will highlight the actions the relevant partners have taken to ensure the issue of knife crime is addresses in the borough.
- 1.2 Below are the 13 recommendations provided by the Scrutiny committee and the relevant updates. This report aims to provide members with the assurance that knife crime remains a key priority within Brent which is being addressed collectively as a partnership.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the committee is assured that the scrutiny recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 14 October 2021 have been implemented

## 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In accordance with Part 4 of the Brent Council Constitution (Standing Orders of Committees) Brent Council scrutiny committees may make recommendations

to the Full Council or the Cabinet with respect to any functions which are the responsibility of the executive or of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive, or on matters which affect the borough or its inhabitants. The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee may also make recommendations to the relevant NHS bodies or relevant health service providers or Full Council.

#### **4.0 Response and update to Knife Crime: An inquiry into knife crime in Brent**

##### **4.1**

Brent Council and partners are committed to ensure the safety of those in community through the reduction of knife crime incidents and offences. There is the recognised strategic priority to 'Reducing the impact of gangs and / or knives in our community' in the Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy (2018-2021) to provide a partnership commitment to address Knife Crime.

##### **4.2**

Throughout 2020 and into 2021 the nation has been gripped by a Pandemic and this has impacted the work we deliver, and timescales, as we have had to adjust in line with government and health guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Throughout this difficult time we have not stepped away from our commitment in challenging knife crime in our community. Below are the previous and current updates inline with the recommendations.

##### **4.3 Recommendation 1:**

A multi-agency, contextual safeguarding approach must be taken by the council to address knife crime, and to overcome barriers in information sharing and collaboration between agencies.

##### **Updates:**

Children and Young Peoples Service have employed a dedicated contextual safeguarding lead, providing case support and oversight to all cases involving children and young people. We continue to embed Contextual Safeguarding in Brent across all areas of work.

##### **4.4 Recommendation 2:**

The Brent Knife Crime Action Plan and the Brent Knife Crime and Serious Violence action plan should be refreshed to join up actions and strategies across early help, family solutions and other children and young people's services with community protection to derive one action plan going forward.

##### **Updates:**

1. Brent Youth Justice Plan - All local authorities are required to have one. It sets out the aims and past performance of the Brent Youth Justice partnership with particular reference to Youth Offending Services (YOS).

2. Knife Crime – The Knife Crime Action Plan was reviewed by the Violence reduction unit (VRU) and identified as good practice in comparison to all other London Boroughs. In April 2021 the format was reviewed and the Violence Reduction Action Plan was designed. Following partnership consultation Brent developed and adopted its plan in September 2021. This will be reviewed at the Safer Brent Partnership Board every 6 months

3. Youth Justice Improvement Plan 2020 -21 and 2021 – 22 includes all recommendations from the YOS Inspection by HMIP published in December 2019. Particular areas of focus have included changes to the Out of Court Disposals processes, review and monitor decision-making to ensure that there is no unnecessary criminalisation of children with high levels of welfare needs as well as ensuring there is enough capacity in this part of the service. Secondly to provide services to children and young people who are not in education, training and employment and finally to provide suitable and sufficient places for children and young people to be seen and supervised.

4. The Exploitation Violence and Vulnerability Panel (EVVP), was established December 2020, it is the alignment of the MASE Panel and the Violence and Vulnerability Panel, both multi-agency professionals meetings now aligned and held fortnightly to discuss cases of concern in the borough. The main focus is to identify local resources and interventions that can provide support, reduce risk and support safeguarding plans. The Panel is Co-chaired with the Local Authority and the Police.

See Appendix 1 – Violence Reduction Action Plan (September 2021)

See Appendix 2 – Youth Justice Plan 2020/21

#### 4.5 Recommendation 3:

The council to support and encourage community projects that aim to prevent 'at risk' young people from being drawn into knife crime, and are set up with measureable evaluation outcomes.

##### Updates:

The Young Brent Foundation (YBF) has been commissioned through Community Safety and funded through the Violence Reduction Unit to deliver interventions to young women and girls in Brent at risk of gangs and exploitation. The providers are a consortium of local Brent projects.

The Young Brent Foundation has been successful in obtaining funding for the 'My Ends' programme and is supporting a consortium of local grass roots projects to deliver interventions to young people. YBF continue to work alongside our Children and Young People's services and other local partners to reduce and prevent knife crime and other serious youth violence.

Community Protection continue to provide local interventions to divert from or at risk of criminality through the Violence and Vulnerability Programme. The success of the program has seen the serious perpetrators of crimes who were referred through to the Violence and vulnerability programme (VVP) **where 75% of the cohort have not re-offended** since being added to the program.

There is access to mentoring support, sports programmes, outreach and wider community programmes, including mental health and wellbeing. We are able to monitor and consider safeguarding concerns through our Exploitation,

Violence and Vulnerability Panel (EVVP) which is held fortnightly to ensure case progression and a reduction in reoffending.

Brent Council has now established an alternative provision free school with an integrated youth offer located at the Roundwood Centre in Harlesden. Brent Council successfully procured the provision for Roundwood Youth Centre with approval being made by the Department for Education on which provider. The alternative free school has been open since early February 2020.

The integrated youth offer is open to all young people across Brent, including young people attending the Alternative Provision Free School. The successful provider is able to offer educational opportunities, enrichment and youth services delivered by the right mix of practitioners, including teachers and youth workers, working with and alongside young people to improve their life chances. The Brent Alternative Provision Free School with integrated youth also offers a safe space for young people and will support the wider efforts to reduce the impact of knife crime.

The integrated youth offer means that the new school will deliver alternative education provision on site during the school day, with youth provision delivered in the mornings, evenings, weekends and school holidays, in line with the MyPlace outcomes below:

- More young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities
- More young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure time activities that support their personal and social development
- More young people having access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable

Currently, some of the activities taking place at the Roundwood Youth Centre include:

- Mixed Martial Arts
- Music Studio
- Prospects Careers Advice and Guidance
- Multi-Sports
- Cooking
- Arts and Craft
- SAAFI (Somali Advice and Forum of Information (Brent)) also run knife crime workshops at Roundwood Youth Centre for the Somali Community.

The educational and MyPlace outcomes will be closely monitored as part of the new provision.

The Valuing Live Programme is funded via the National Lottery (Reaching Communities) and is a 3-year (£480,000) fully funded consortium programme with (12 local partners).

It has been exploring the evidence and changes in:

- 1) How providers are able to focus on positive life experiences for children and young people and their families to change negative / turn around behaviours.
- 2) How as a society through a Theory of Change approach, look to change the behaviours of the sector (both internal and external) in working with children and young people.

Goldsmiths College will provide the systemic review (TofC) and Research required to evidence the outcomes. London Borough of Brent's Early Help, Youth Offending Team and Community Safety are key internal partners.

#### **4.6 Recommendation 4:**

A graphic and hard-hitting media project be funded, which involves ex-offenders, role models and victims and focuses on knife crime's impact on individuals, families and communities.

##### **Updates:**

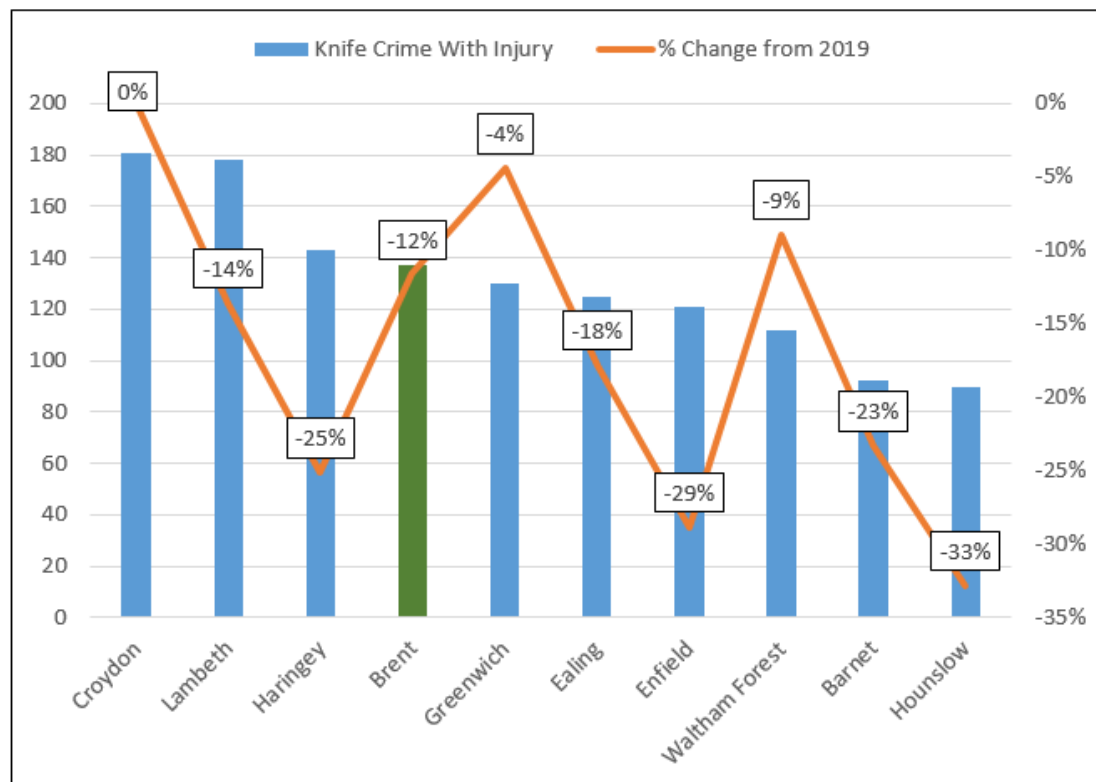
We are presently in the trial stages of delivering our local knife crime intervention project, which uses Virtual Reality (VR) technology to simulate a 360 degree virtual experience of the victim and perpetrator of a knife crime incident. The programme has been funded by the Home office and created with the police using local Brent locations. The roll out of the project has been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions, we are projecting wider access to school and groups.

The Community Safety team are supporting the current campaign with the Metropolitan Police and Crimestoppers. Highlighting and appealing to people in communities that 'calling with information about knife crime may be hard, but there are harder calls'. The focus is on five mothers who share their experience of losing a son to knife crime. One of the mothers lost her son Quamari Barnes due to knife crime and she shares the impact this had on her and her family.

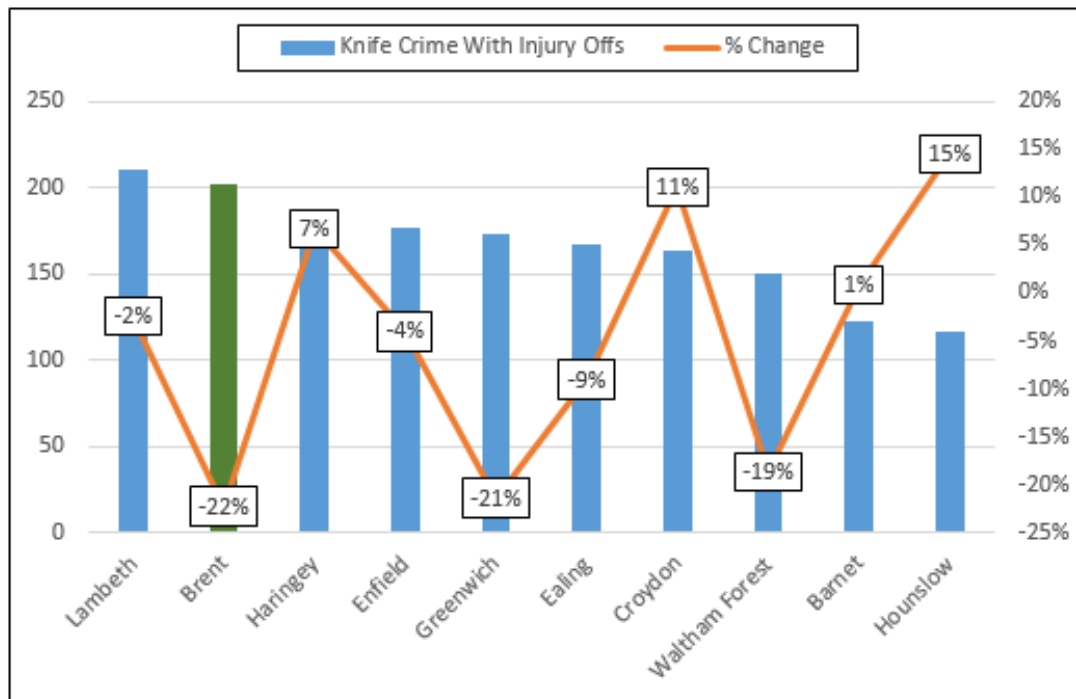
Community Safety continues to support a project delivered by the MPS called 'No Knives Better Lives'. The event is a collaborative event supported by the Court, Police, Local Authority, School, Community and Youth Services to support young people who are experiencing challenges in their lives which could lead to involvement with the criminal justice system. It is an interactive event with a mock trial, judges, guest speakers and an opportunity for discussion. Speakers include a trauma surgeon, former gang member, Kinsella Foundation, a high ranking Police Officer, The Recorder for London - HHJ Hilliard, a Barrister and a parent of a young deceased person. The main aim of the event is to show people the effects of knife crime, in a detailed manner from the most suitable agencies and people who deal with knife injuries on a daily basis. There are also opportunities available for young people to divert themselves from this path.

Amani Simpson has lived experience as a young man having battled with the consequences of his actions and wider impact on those around him after being stabbed seven times. Amani has delivered the funded 6 week intervention programme across some of the schools one of Brent's violence hotspots. Amani has engaged students in the programme that has enabled them to reflect on their behaviour and also incorporate mindfulness while doing so. Being in the moment at that moment we recognise will teach students to be responsible and aware of their thoughts, feelings and sensations.

The graph below shows the number of knife crime with injury offences in Brent (highlighted) alongside the borough's most similar groups.



There was a 12% decrease in knife crime with injury offences in Brent in 2020 compared with 2019. The next chart displays the 2018 and 2019 figures where Brent had the second highest knife crime with injury offences but the highest decrease in offences compared with the most similar boroughs.



There was a 22% decrease in knife crime with injury offences in Brent in 2018/19. The two tables highlight the continuing downward in knife crime with injury offences in Brent party achieved through partnership actions and awareness raising.

#### 4.7 Recommendation 5:

The MPS must improve relations with local communities. This may be achieved by providing a more visible presence in neighborhoods and adopting a more empathetic method of stop and search.

##### Updates:

Stop and search statistics are discussed at every Police Independent Advisory Group (IAG) meeting. The group is also attended by Community Protection to ensure partnership working and support from the local authority. The group is represented by members of the public in Brent who are also very active in the community.

The police are working alongside partners to improve community relationships, the IAG are leading on a piece of work which is training and advising officers on the implication of stop and search on members of the community.

Further Community action and initiatives are also being developed and supported by the MET Police, such as the innovation hubs to try to improve policing relationships and trial new approaches to problem solving.

#### 4.8 Recommendation 6:

Brent CCG to work with statutory partners (including the council) to enable the provision of more services at hospital A&E departments at the 'teachable moment', such as RedThread. Stakeholders in primary and tertiary care should be educated in how to approach knife crime issues.

### **Updates:**

Community Safety have successfully commissioned St Giles Trust to deliver provision within the A&E department in Northwick Park Hospital, funded through the violence reduction unit. This service is focused on improving the identification of vulnerable people and reduce vulnerability of young victims of violence, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time and increase the number of young people being supported through appropriate local longer-term interventions. The overall aim is to contribute to disrupting the cycle of violence and reducing further victimisation or exploitation. Additionally, increase the awareness and knowledge of vulnerability and safeguarding issues in the Emergency Department for staff.

The project has been well received so far with the Hospital staff having the access to an engagement worker who is trained to speak with the young person, family and friends and gather further information to support safeguarding post hospitalisation.

## **4.9 Recommendation 7:**

The council to support and encourage schools and other community organisations to make their facilities available for youth-focused activities after school hours and during holidays, to keep young people engaged in positive activities and deterred from crime.

### **Updates:**

'Your Life You Choose'(YLYC) Brent delivered a one day multi-agency presentation to educate young people about the consequences of crime, not only for the offender but their family and friends, victims and the wider community.

The project is led by magistrates in the North West London Justice Area in conjunction with the Youth Offending Service. YLYC Brent brings together magistrates, police – safer schools officers and Trident officers, prison officers, EOTAS – inclusion officers, Directions project – ex offenders, paramedics, education consultation in cyberbullying & sexting.

Brent YOS had plans on facilitating a Restorative Justice Session with schools across LB Brent in 2020, however due to the pandemic this has been put on hold to be reviewed at a later stage.

Brent Safer Together Through Sport is a Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) funded project, which provides young people who are at risk of being drawn into gangs, violence or antisocial behaviour with after-school activities and mentoring.

The project provides diversion from gangs for 12 young people in Year 5 and Year 6 from 6 schools in the Harlesden and Stonebridge localities. They will receive some lunchtime sport mentoring followed by two after school multi-sport sessions per week for the whole of Y6, plus a Sunday event where families have tasters of local clubs which they are supported and accompanied to attend.

The project focuses on crime prevention by targeting the most vulnerable young people at an early age and working with them for an extended period to establish long-term positive behaviours.



#### **4.10 Recommendation 8:**

The council to work with Brent primary and secondary schools, the Brent School Partnership (BSP) and the Safer Brent Partnership, to develop and implement a Schools Safety Charter.

##### **Updates:**

Brent schools have a range of policies and procedures that address issues related to knife crime and the risk of serious youth violence. The Designated Safeguarding Leads have contributed to the Violence reduction action plan and remain active in membership at key safeguarding forums and meeting.

#### **4.11 Recommendation 9:**

The council must enhance the way it works with Brent youth offending services, London CRC and the National Probation Service in order to support offenders who can be rehabilitated, and continue to manage and assess risk.

##### **Updates:**

There is now consistent and clear lines of partnership working and accountability.

This has recently been evidenced in January 2021 when the YOS, Probation, CRC and Community Safety pulled together a joint funding bid with the aim to secure a co located multi-disciplinary team, we were unfortunately unsuccessful in receiving the Grant, however the improved working, flexibility and support offers a greater ability to meet the needs of those within the criminal justice system.

The YOS also now receives a full time Probation officer who is co located in the team to support with cases transitioning into the Probation / CRC to ensure continuity of support and close case oversight.

As the CRC are going through a process of re-unification back into the probation service, we will continue to monitor the partnership relationships and response.

#### **4.12 Recommendation 10:**

The council to facilitate more collaborative working between the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and religious organisations, to raise funds for projects and training to prevent knife crime.

##### **Updates:**

Strategy & Partnerships alongside community protection delivered a meeting with community organisations around the knife crime agenda in early March 2020, encouraging greater joint-working among Brent-wide organisations, discussing funding opportunities and providing an opportunity for networking. Due to Covid-19 and national restrictions the follow up work has been on hold.

The community agencies which did attend received useful information on the steps to take when sourcing funding and how to utilise and gather data to support a project as well as key Community Safety information.

#### **4.13 Recommendation 11:**

The council to make representations to Government to put guidance in place on the handling of housing needs cases for those at risk of violence (through gangs/ county lines) and reconsider the threshold at which someone who is deemed to be at sufficient risk gets re-housing support.

##### **Updates:**

Current housing processes remain and exist pan London. Individuals may approach councils due to fear of violence and cases will be accessed.

#### **4.14 Recommendation 12:**

The council to make representations to the GLA/ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime/ Violence Reduction Unit advising that the county lines programme is running at full capacity with an increasing unmet need. More intensive, longer-term funding needs to be provided.

##### **Updates:**

MOPAC has been aware of the ongoing capacity concerns of the Rescue and Response project and these concerns were raised at the contract review meeting held on 20th January 2020. The issues around capacity and unmet needs were also addressed at a VRU event held on 17th January 2020 and continually monitored throughout the contract in 2020.

MOPAC confirmed that the project is to be extended for a further year 2020-2021. There has been exceptional positive feedback regarding the program and the impact it is having pan London and specifically in Brent.

#### **4.15 Recommendation 13:**

The council to further explore bids for external funding for innovative council and CVS projects, to tackle the risks associated with young people becoming involved in crime.

##### **Updates:**

Brent Youth Offending Service is a member of the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) Serious Youth Violence Reference Group. Funding obtained from the YJB to test innovation has been used to contribute to community delivered out of hours mentoring provision for high risk young people.

In September 2019, Brent were advised of the successful outcome of the Mayor's Young Londoners Fund bid. This will provide 3 year funding for the Early Help service to lead the work with young people between 10 and 18 years who are at risk of becoming involved in crime, not achieving their educational potential and at risk of poor health outcomes in adulthood, because of indicators such as poor school attendance, school exclusions, siblings being involved in crime and living in families who have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences. The project will adopt a whole family, trauma informed approach to address the underlying issues and build family

resilience to improve the likelihood of young people fulfilling their potential/ or improving young people's life chances.

**The strands of the project are:**

**Family coaches**

Brent will work develop Family Coaches, to build strong relationships with families, to understand the underlying issues through an Early Help Assessment. They will be guiding the families through the trauma recovery model for them to accept and understand how their past experiences impact their family life. By proactively using the Signs of Safety (SoS) approach with a focus on “appreciative enquiry”, we will enable families to understand their strengths. Over time, it has become apparent that several children within the same family may have worked with Youth Offending, or attend an alternative education provision. By working in a whole family way, supporting parents to address their trauma will increase their confidence to parent their younger children. It is anticipated that this will help the families to build resilience, reducing the likelihood of perpetuating similar difficulties experienced by the older siblings.

**Street Mentors for young people Volunteer Community Sector**

Services for young people would be complemented by centre based and youth outreach activities. Male and female Street Mentors, will work with at-risk young people (between 10 to 18 years). Some of their work will be outside of traditional service hours in order to engage young people in areas and places they go to. They will establish trusting relationships, to start the journey of recovery. Group work will focus on gangs’ awareness, resilience and choices, linking young people to council teams and voluntary services to meet their needs. They will also monitor and intervene with group conflict, working with the police and Community Protection team and in the community in line with our shared contextual safeguarding approach.

**Emotional well-being support**

A young person’s mental health practitioner will undertake mental health assessments and direct interventions with vulnerable young people in families experiencing crisis, thus preventing delays in support, addressing issues to prevent escalation. This will complement current Troubled Families work in Brent, providing extended provision and extra support for complex cases. By focusing on an established risk factor for offending behaviour, this intervention embodies the move towards the public health approach set out in the Government’s Serious Violence Strategy. Mental health support may be pivotal in preventing gang-affiliation and/or perpetration of youth violence, by building confidence, developing resilience, self-awareness, and coping strategies.

**5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 None

**6.0 Legal Implications**

6.1 None

**7.0 Equality Implications**

7.1 None

**8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

**8.1** Through key delivery and partnership boards, the voice of the user is reflected in case studies and in review / audits of interventions.

**8.2** The Lead Member for Community Protection and Engagement is aware and has been briefed. She continues to monitor this line of work alongside the Safer Brent Partnership Members.

**9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

9.1 None

**Report sign off:**

**Alan Lunt**  
**Director of Regeneration and Environment**